

## ELEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH PROGRAMS

National PTA believes that health is based on the quality of life of the whole child—emotional, environmental, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual. All elements must be considered before optimum health can exist.

National PTA recognizes that:

- Social changes have produced major health problems among our children that have a direct impact on schools and their ability to educate;
- Early diagnosis and treatment of children’s vision problems is a necessary component to school readiness and academic learning; and that vision screening is *not a substitute* for a complete eye and vision evaluation by an eye doctor. Comprehensive eye and vision examinations by an optometrist or ophthalmologist are important for all children first entering school and regularly throughout their school-aged years to ensure healthy eyes and adequate vision skills essential for successful academic achievement;
- Academic achievement and student self-esteem and well-being are interrelated;
- While the well-being of children is primarily the responsibility of the home, responsibility for the emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health of children is shared by the whole community and of all its institutions;
- That, after the home, the school is often best positioned to serve as the community’s center for meeting the needs of the whole child; and
- By encouraging creative integration of education, physical and mental health, housing, employment, and other social services, we can reach vulnerable families.

National PTA believes that a comprehensive health program, encompassing health education, health services and healthy school environment includes the following components:

Policy and goals established by local school boards in partnership with parents, students, educators, community health care providers and others, and includes the development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive school health program.

Health Curriculum that is comprehensive for all students preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, sequentially developed, age and culturally appropriate, reflects current health issues of the community, and is taught by educators qualified to present health instruction. The curriculum and instruction program should include the following content areas: accident prevention and safety, community health, consumer health, disease control and prevention, environmental health, eye and vision health, family life education, mental and emotional health, nutrition, personal health, self-esteem building, substance abuse prevention, and violence prevention.

Health Services that appropriately reflect the educational and community commitment to address identified health problems that limit students' abilities to learn.

Healthy school environments that demonstrate care for physical facilities, stress the importance of positive mental health and emotional climates within the school setting, and ensure the physical safety of the students and staff.

School-site health promotion programs for faculty and staff that include wellness components, which will increase job satisfaction, morale and a healthy quality of life.

Integrated school and community health promotion efforts that acknowledge the shared responsibility for student health with the home, public and private health care systems, law enforcement and justice systems, government, environmental agencies, business, religious organizations, civic groups and the media.

Physical education programs that promote lifelong physical activities and fitness, higher order cognitive and affective objectives, and health-related fitness testing.

Food service programs that reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of students and staff, encourage and promote the health and well-being of students through the serving of nutritionally adequate quality meals, and provide a program of nutrition education.

School counseling programs that work with students, families and school personnel in the areas of emotional, mental and social growth and development; and collaborate with community professionals in order to serve the whole child.

Parent, family and community education that includes research and awareness of issues that affect children's health and welfare. These education and awareness campaigns should be encouraged and promoted at national, state and local levels.

Dissemination of information through use of National PTA resources and relationships with cooperating organizations.

National PTA believes that comprehensive school health programs are an essential link in the health education/health care chain.

In order to fulfill the responsibility of offering educational opportunities to all children, we need to recognize and deal with their health needs as they impact our schools and communities.

Therefore, parents, schools, and communities are encouraged to work together in partnership to provide effective, comprehensive health programs and policies.

Adopted: by the 2002 Board of Directors

Amended: by the 2005 Board of Directors